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Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

Summary record of the 376th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 7 April 2016, at 4 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Rubiales de Chamorro (Vice-Chair) ..... (Nicaragua)

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In the absence of the Chair, Ms. Rubiales de Chamorro (Nicaragua), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 4.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and developments in the political process

2. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine), having congratulated the former Acting Chief of the Division for Palestinian Rights on his recent appointment as Chief, expressed appreciation on behalf of the Palestinian people and their leadership for the Division's work.

3. Letters from his delegation, sent once a week on average to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council and issued as official documents of the United Nations, detailed the crimes committed on a daily basis by the Israeli occupying army and settlers against the Palestinian people in the Occupied Territory. In one recent case, a widely publicized video, filmed by a field worker from the Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem, had shown an Israeli soldier declining to give a wounded young Palestinian medical assistance before killing him by a bullet to the head while he was lying on the ground. For some time, his delegation had been asking the Security Council not merely to condemn such crimes but to fulfil its responsibility under resolutions 605 (1987) and 904 (1994) to provide protection for the Palestinian civilian population until the end of the occupation. The delegation of Egypt was currently conducting consultations with fellow Council members with a view to setting a date for an Arria Formula meeting to discuss that issue and to maximize pressure on the Israeli authorities to stop their illegal conduct and bring the perpetrators to justice. The discussion would be informed by the aforementioned resolutions and by the review of historical precedents for regimes that had been devised to provide varying forms of protection for areas of territory and their inhabitants (S/2015/809). He hoped that many Committee members would attend the meeting, which would complement the ongoing effort to ensure that the International Criminal Court launched a full investigation into the war crimes committed against the Palestinian people during the war in Gaza and as a result of the continuing Israeli settlement activity.

4. The Security Council was also scheduled to hold an open debate on the situation in the Middle East on 18 April 2016 and he urged as many Committee members as possible to participate. His delegation was consulting with colleagues from the Group of Arab States on a draft resolution and hoped that intensive consultations with all members of the Council would follow. If the Council could agree unanimously that Israeli settlements in Palestinian territory were illegal and constituted an obstacle to peace, it would have a duty to act by adopting a resolution demanding that Israel should cease its illegal behaviour. Such a move by the Council would also bolster the French initiative to convene an international peace conference. It was not acceptable for the Council to remain paralysed on the issue. Any member that obstructed agreement would bear the weight of responsibility for the continued failure to make progress.

5. The situation on the ground in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was volatile. Six months had passed since the beginning of the current youth uprising, and no progress had been made on the political front. The Israeli authorities had suspended the import of cement into Gaza, which would have a catastrophic impact on reconstruction. The United Nations needed to find a way to ensure that the shipment of construction materials resumed. Electricity supply to Bethlehem and the surrounding areas had also recently been suspended on a variety of pretexts, but had just been restored.

6. His delegation was looking forward to the third International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem, to be held in Dakar on 3 and 4 May 2016, and was working hard, in coordination with the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights, to make it a success. It was important to raise awareness of the situation in Jerusalem and to resist the attempts of extremist Jewish groups to provoke confrontation over religious sites such as the Al-Aqsa mosque and the Haram al-Sharif. He was pleased to announce that there were plans to hold a special ceremony at the Conference to honour all the Ambassadors of Senegal who had served as Chair of the Committee since its inception 40 years previously.

Report on the United Nations Round Table on Legal Aspects of the Question of Palestine, Amman, 15 to 17 March 2016

7. **The Chair** drew attention to the Chair's summary of the United Nations Round Table on Legal Aspects of the Question of Palestine.

8. **Mr. Grima** (Malta), Rapporteur, delivering the report on the Round Table on behalf of the Chair of the Committee, said that the theme of the Round Table had been "Instruments and institutions of international treaty law — theory and practice". The Committee had been represented at the Round Table by the Observer for the State of Palestine and the Chair. The Ambassador of Indonesia to Jordan and the State of Palestine had also attended part of the event.

9. The Round Table, an initiative of the Committee, had been aimed at developing the expertise of Palestinian Government staff in the field of international treaty law, including mechanisms for implementation, reporting obligations and other practices. It had been attended by 25 Palestinian cadres from various ministries and entities of the State of Palestine, including the Independent Commission for Human Rights, leading international scholars and experienced United Nations human rights practitioners. Participants had reviewed the fundamentals of international treaty law theory and its institutional framework and had discussed the current status of the State of Palestine in relation to international legal instruments, particularly in the light of its recent accession to a number of such instruments. Individual sessions had focused on challenges for emerging States with regard to international treaty law and institutions; reporting and implementation with regard to human rights treaties; international environmental law; the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea; and incorporating a gender perspective in treaty implementation and reporting.

10. Participants had stated that the event had been of great benefit for their daily work, particularly with regard to ensuring respect for human rights under national and international law. They had also voiced a strong desire for further capacity-building efforts by the Committee in a variety of fields. The Committee wished to thank all participants for their contributions, which would be taken into account in the planning of future activities.

11. At a bilateral meeting on the margins of the Round Table with the heads of the Human Rights Department, the Negotiations Coordination Bureau and the Legal Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Jordan, the Committee delegation had expressed its appreciation for the strong support shown by Jordan for the fulfilment of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The two sides had also discussed opportunities for cooperation in the future.

12. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine) thanked the Government of Jordan, and also the country's Ambassador in New York, Dina Kawar, and her team, for their efforts to facilitate the success of the Round Table and expressed appreciation for the constructive meeting held in Amman with officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates. It had been thrilling to see that the 25 young Palestinian cadres — a group consisting mostly of lawyers and with almost equal numbers of men and women — were eager to learn and to shoulder their responsibility for building the infrastructure of the State of Palestine. They had reported being inspired by what they had learned from the three days of intensive discussions.

13. A number of round tables had now been held on legal and human rights matters, and he therefore hoped that future events could focus on building capacity and knowledge in other important fields, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including financing for development, the Sustainable Development Goals, climate change and water-related issues.

International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem, Dakar, 3 and 4 May 2016 (working paper No. 2)

14. **The Chair** drew attention to working paper No. 2, which contained the provisional programme of the International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem, to be held in Dakar on 3 and 4 May 2016. The objectives of the event were to provide up-to-date information on the situation in East Jerusalem; to identify opportunities to intensify international support for resilience, protection and development in the city; to explore solutions and scenarios for a just and lasting settlement of the question of Jerusalem; and to provide a forum for open exchange among policymakers, experts, practitioners, activists and academics. Representatives of United Nations Member States and

observers, other intergovernmental organizations and the media had also been invited to the Conference.

15. **Mr. Barro** (Senegal) said that his Government was fully engaged in preparations for the Conference, as members of a mission from the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat had witnessed during their recent visit to Dakar. Careful attention was being paid to the thematic and logistical aspects of the Conference, including security, with a view to facilitating the participation of civil society representatives. His Government would spare no effort in ensuring its success, in keeping with Committee members' longstanding commitment to the rights of the Palestinian people.

16. **Mr. Emvula** (Namibia), Vice-Chair, wished to know, particularly in view of the movement restrictions that experts traveling from the Occupied Palestinian Territory might encounter, whether any experts had confirmed their intention to participate in the first plenary meeting of the Conference under the theme "Life in East Jerusalem under occupation" and in the second plenary meeting under the sub-theme "African action and support to the Palestinian people."

17. **Mr. Tamburi** (Division for Palestinian Rights) said that the Division was awaiting confirmation from several experts who had been invited to participate in the Conference and would soon provide the Bureau with updated information on the confirmed participants. He welcomed the Committee's suggestions for appropriate experts to address the sub-theme "African action and support to the Palestinian people."

18. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that the Conference would provide an opportunity for the President of the State of Palestine to extend special recognition to the Government of Senegal for its commitment to the rights of the Palestinian people. In the event that Israel obstructed the participation of Palestinian experts, particularly those invited to discuss the question of Jerusalem, a list of alternatives should be prepared in order to ensure adequate representation of Palestinian experts at the Conference. Strong participation of experts from African countries would reinforce the message that normalized relations between Africa and Israel would not be possible until the Israeli occupation ended and the State of Palestine achieved independence, thereby providing an effective response to Prime Minister Netanyahu's claims of developing ties between Africa and his country during his recent visit to Kenya. In that connection, he suggested that former President of the General Assembly Salim Ahmed Salim should be invited to participate in the Conference.

19. **The Chair** noted that several experts from Senegal had been invited to participate in the Conference. She took it that the Committee wished to approve the provisional programme contained in working paper No. 2.

20. *It was so decided.*

Activities of the Working Group of the Committee

21. **Ms. Daudey** (Malta) said that the Working Group had convened a brainstorming session, attended by representatives of 21 delegations, in which participants had emphasized the need to open briefings by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to the Working Group to the broader United Nations membership. Participants had also suggested that briefings should be organized at the margins of major United Nations events, and that briefings on the situation on the ground in Occupied Palestinian Territory should be timed to coincide with the issuance of related reports. Participants had discussed the need to increase outreach to Israeli NGOs and support for people-to-people contact between Israelis and Palestinians, as well as to engage with Palestinian youth, reach out to universities and schools in the United States and support the involvement of Palestinian civil society in the work of the United Nations. They had also underscored the need to diversify the activities sponsored by the Working Group and to support the organization of cultural events. Lastly, participants suggested that efforts should be undertaken at the ambassadorial level to reach out to specific media outlets and journalists, including by inviting media representatives to selected briefings, and would seek the Committee's approval in that regard.

22. The panel discussion on the role of women in the search for Israeli-Palestinian peace organized by the Working Group at the margins of sixtieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women had been attended by, inter alia, Committee members and some 100 representatives of civil society organizations. A representative of the NGO Human Rights Watch had presented research demonstrating the critical importance of women's engagement in peace processes

and the legal advisor to the Palestinian negotiations team had emphasized that, while women often performed technical roles in the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiation process, they remained underrepresented in decision-making. Representatives of Palestinian civil society organizations underscored that, although support for Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) had been mobilized, a national action plan for its implementation had yet to be adopted. Lastly, a representative of the Israeli NGO Coalition of Women for Peace had noted that support for the Israeli peace camp had been dwindling and that initiatives to silence criticism from activists had been discouraging peace demonstrations in Israel. The panel discussion had exposed a range of civil society organizations focused on gender to the issues surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and had facilitated communication between different sectors of civil society. Going forward, the Working Group planned to host similar discussions at the margins of other upcoming events, including the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and to invite prominent civil society organizations to give briefings on other topical issues. The Working Group would continue to implement the ideas emanating from the brainstorming session, which would be outlined in a strategy paper for the Committee's endorsement, and welcomed input from the Committee on ways to strengthen its outreach efforts.

23. Lastly, the Working Group was sponsoring a screening of the film "Giraffada" by Palestinian director Rani Massalha that evening, which would be followed by a question-and-answer session with the director.

24. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine) commended the Working Group's efforts to host cultural events that enhanced awareness of various aspects of the lives and struggles of the Palestinian people. He suggested that the Working Group should organize, in collaboration with the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat, a screening of the film *The Wanted 18*, which offered a humorous perspective on the struggle of Palestinians living under Israeli occupation, and a discussion with the Palestinian author Suad Amiry. The Division was also considering inviting Palestinian-American comedians to perform at the United Nations in an effort to promote a humanistic portrayal of the Palestinian experience from the perspective of Palestinians themselves.

Other matters

25. **The Chair** said that the Committee Chair would represent the Committee at the thirteenth session of the Islamic Summit Conference, which convened every three years to review the international political, economic and social situation and its impact on the global Islamic community. The Committee had developed close relations with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in recent years, including through their co-sponsorship of the annual Conference on the Question of Jerusalem. Lastly, the Committee Chair would deliver a statement to the Security Council at its upcoming quarterly open debate on the Middle East, with a focus on the situation in Israel and Palestine. She urged all participants in the debate to demonstrate solidarity with the Palestinian people.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.